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COUNTY PLANNING SUMMARY

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FARMERS have accepted the opportunity afforded by the county land-use planning program to participate with technicians and administrators in the democratic development of agricultural plans, policies, and programs through organized community, county, and State planning committees. In the first 12 months after the program was initiated jointly by the Department of Agriculture and land-grant colleges, it reached 1,120 counties in 47 States. Nearly 70,000 farm men and women are cooperating as members of organized county and community planning committees.

Memoranda of understanding between the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the State agricultural extension services and experiment stations, covering the features of the planning organization and the general types of cooperative work, have been signed in 45 States. All these States have established State land-use planning committees or advisory councils except Tennessee and Kentucky. Additionally, in Illinois, an informal State committee has been organized, although the land-grant college has not yet signed the memorandum of understanding. California and Pennsylvania are the other States that have not yet entered into formal arrangements with the Bureau. In Illinois and California, many of the land-use planning activities proposed by the Department are being performed.

State land-use planning committees vary in both size and composition, depending upon the number of State organizations represented and the number of type-of-farming areas in the State. Arizona, with 12 members, has the smallest committee; New York, the largest, has 48 members. On the 43 State committees now organized, 552 farmers are serving. This is an average of 13 farmers to the committee.

Four Department agencies and two State agencies—the Farm Security Administration, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Soil Conservation Service, and Bureau of Agricultural Economics, State extension services and experiment stations—are represented on each of the State land-use planning committees. The Public Roads Administration is represented on 39 committees, the Forest Service on 38, the Farm Credit Administration on 14, and the Bureau of Biological Survey on 13. The Extension Service and experiment stations are represented on all State committees. State planning boards and State highway departments are represented on 21 committees each.

Most of the committees have a membership of from 22 to 30 persons. Farmers constitute a majority of the membership of 17 State committees. In 35 States, farmers are the predominant single group. Representatives of the Department of Agriculture outnumber the farmers in 4 States.

About 19,000 farmers are members of organized county planning committees, and nearly 51,000 are serving on 6,807 organized community committees.

Farmers predominate in the membership of county committees, with representatives of the Department representing the next largest group in most counties. Community committees almost without exception are made up solely of farm men and women.

Besides the 1,120 counties with county land-use planning committees, there are 75 counties in which planning activities are being conducted by community committees prior to formal organization of county planning committees. Besides, a number of counties have set up county committees, but have not progressed to the stage of establishing formal community committees.

In many instances, farmer members of county and community land-use planning committees are also members of farm security advisory committees, agricultural conservation program committees, production credit committees, and many others. It is estimated that about 200,000 farmers, in addition to members of county or community planning committees, took part in land-use planning meetings held during the 6 months ending December 31, 1939.

The number of meetings held by individual county and community planning committees during the same

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6 months varied from one to nine, depending on the stage of the planning work. Some county committees have set up executive and subject-matter subcommittees to give intensive attention to specific phases of the county planning committee's work.

During the fiscal year 1939-40, 1,195 counties were selected for planning. Of these, 388 were designated as "preparatory," 761 as "intensive," and 46 as "unified," to use the vocabulary of the county planning project.

Of the 765 counties chosen for intensive planning at the start of the fiscal year, 566 actually carried on area mapping and classification work prior to January 1, 1940. In 47 of the selected counties, work has not advanced beyond the study of basic information and in 152 others intensive work has not begun. In 225 counties the county and community committees have already finished their area classification maps. In 112 counties the work has progressed to the point where a preliminary draft of the area mapping and classification report is being reviewed by the State land-use planning committee. County reports covering the results of area mapping and classification for 59 counties have been reviewed by the State land-use planning committees and submitted to the Department. These reports are being analyzed and summarized.

To date, 43 of the 46 unified counties have made appreciable progress. Formal progress reports from Wyoming County, N. Y.; Ross County, Ohio; Lewis County, W. Va.; Chittenden County, Vt.; Coos County, Oreg.; Allegany County, Md.; Lee County, Ala.; Caswell County, N. C.; and Culpeper County, Va., including agreements by action agencies to initiate recommendations of the land-use planning committees and statements of action that have been started, have been studied and approved by the Inter-Bureau Coordinating Committee. Committees in about a dozen more counties have submitted either preliminary or final reports proposing unified county programs. These will be ready for presentation to the Inter-Bureau Coordinating Committee in the near future. The other counties are still in the process of preparing plans.

Some 738 recorded instances of results growing out of the land-use planning program during the last 6 months have reached the Department of Agriculture. They occurred in 445 counties in 38 States. These results have been in the nature of conserving natural resources, improvement of rural living conditions, action on school costs and organization, counsel on State and local legislative and administrative policy, adaptation of action programs to local conditions,

measures to facilitate coordination of agricultural programs, achievements through cooperative undertakings, and orientation of educational programs.

Land-use planning was not, of course, solely responsible for all of them. In some instances, steps toward solutions probably would have been initiated without it; in others, land-use planning merely provided the additional stimulus needed to obtain results; but in many, the committees identified problems, proposed remedial measures, and sponsored the corrective action.

As examples of the first type of results—conserving natural resources—planning committees assisted in the organization of soil conservation districts in Yell County, Ark.; De Baca County, N. Mex.; Tillamook County, Oreg.; Box Elder County, Utah; Elbert County, Colo.; and Culpeper County, Va. In Quay County, N. Mex., and Marshall County, S. Dak., the boundaries of existing districts were extended.

The part played by the land-use planning committees in sponsoring soil conservation districts has varied from place to place, but in all these counties the committees have studied the erosion problem and recommended that districts be set up. In addition, the committees often have arranged public educational meetings, and committee members have circulated petitions to get the required number of signatures. How well these methods have worked is shown in Box Elder County, Utah, where earlier efforts to form a district had failed.

In a number of counties, the Soil Conservation Service has used the planning reports in drawing up district programs and work plans, and in other instances the planning committees themselves have given advice and aid in drawing up such district programs and plans of work.

In Kootenai County, Idaho, most of the best farm land is owned by Indians but farmed by white people. Erosion, noxious weeds, and depletion of fertility have caused serious problems. As a result of the efforts of the planning committee, the Soil Conservation Service is preparing conservation plans for these farms, and the Office of Indian Affairs has agreed to include these plans in the leases. In Newberry County, S. C., the committee proposed that land along streams be developed as permanent pasture. The Forest Service has agreed to develop its holdings in these areas for this purpose, while the Soil Conservation Service plans to use C. C. C. labor to clear such land. In the same county, the Farm Security Administration, the Soil Conservation Service and Extension Service have decided to give more attention to winter cover crops in their farm plans.